

Warning and promise— Sunday September 29th 2013.

Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? ¹⁵ Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? ¹⁶ Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

***“I will dwell in them and walk among them;
And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***

¹⁷ “Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate,” says the Lord.

“And do not touch what is unclean;

And I will welcome you.

¹⁸ “And I will be a father to you,

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”

Says the Lord Almighty.

(2 Corinthians 6:14-18)

Beloved in the Lord,

Our text today contains a very important lesson for all of us. We find within this passage a warning and a promise. The warning is not clearly stated but implied. The lesson given to us is that we need to be a Church and not a religious organisation. We need to live as a Church, as a congregation, as a Christian ought to, - namely separated from the world. Jesus said to Peter: ***“I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it.(Matthew 16:18)***

The word translated “Church” is Ecclesia in the original Greek. Ecclesia means the “Called out ones”. The Church is comprised of people who have been called out of this world and set apart for God. We are born in a state of sin and through Jesus we are born again. When we are born again, we are part of the ecclesia. Our role, our mission, our life is to be light and salt. We are to be a light that shines in the darkness. Jesus taught in His sermon on the Mount:

““You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt has become tasteless, how can it be made salty again? It is no longer good for anything, except to be thrown out and trampled under foot by men.

¹⁴ “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; ¹⁵ nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. ¹⁶ Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.(Matthew 5:13-16).

Clearly Jesus says that we are to be as salt and as light. This refers to each believer as an individual, as well as corporately as a Congregation and Church.

The problem with many Christians, congregations and churches is that they are not being salt and light. They are not living as Jesus would have them live. So many have committed the sin of compromise. With every compromise that is made on God's Word, the salt becomes weakened and the light becomes dimmer.

Jesus clearly said that the Church would be under attack, that there is an enemy and enemies, but He also said that they will not prevail. He told Peter that He (Jesus) was going to build His Church and that the gates of hell would not prevail over it. Attack yes, prevail – no!

Satan does everything within his power to ensure that the Churches light does not shine clearly and brightly. He infiltrates congregations and churches and spreads his lies. He comes like a sheep but really is a wolf.

With every compromise a Church makes, it weakens its foundations and eventually it will fall. Erosion is generally a slow process. We see this in nature. In some places that are built near the sea, the sea slowly erodes away the land and eventually whole hillsides collapse taking houses with them. With every compromise a Church makes, a bit more of the foundation is eroded away. I will illustrate it a slightly different way today:

I have here a jug of clear crystal water. If I put a drop of food colouring into it, it immediately starts to become cloudy. It is no longer clear. Every time we doubt God's Word, twist it or compromise, we are adding another drop to the water.

Satan's methods have never changed. He still uses the same lies, the same approach he used in the garden of Eden. He operates to weaken a person's resolve and undermine his principles.

Did God really say...? God will surely not act in such a way would He? He is a God of love isn't He? Times have changed and God's Word needs to change with the times.

With every one of these thoughts and lies, the truth becomes harder to see, because the water has become cloudy. The downward path is a steep slippery slope. What begins with a small compromise end up in total doubting of God's Word.

This is why we must stand firmly on God's Word Alone. We need to respond to Satan as Jesus did: ***"It is written!"***

So much is spoken about, and written about interpretation. Many say it is all about how we interpret God's Word. Rubbish! It is not a matter of interpretation but of faith. Either you believe that the ***Whole Bible*** is God's Word or it isn't. If like me you believe that the whole Bible from Genesis 1:1 to Revelation 22:21 is God's Word, then you do not struggle with interpretation. The Bible interprets itself. All you need to do is say: "God said it, I believe it, and that settles it!" Amen and Amen.

When you trust in God's Word with this type of attitude and faith, then you are blessed, because God The Holy Spirit opens your eyes and gives you understanding..

Problems arise when Church leaders, so called theologians try to please worldly thinking and try to interpret the Bible through the eyes of sinful man. A sinful,, carnal mind always seeks to compromise God's Word, because it does not want it's sin exposed and dealt with. This is why Paul warns us: ***Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?***¹⁵ ***Or what harmony has Christ with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?***¹⁶ ***Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,***

***"I will dwell in them and walk among them;
And I will be their God, and they shall be My people.***

¹⁷ ***"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.***

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And I will welcome you.

¹⁸ ***"And I will be a father to you,***

And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,"

Says the Lord Almighty.

You see it is God's desire to dwell in our midst. Do we want to be a congregation that is blessed? Of course. Do we seek to glorify God in all we do? Yes. Then we must strive to not be unequally yoked with the world, with those who undermine the authority of God's Word.

Paul writes: ***"A little leaven leavens the whole lump of dough. ¹⁰ I have confidence in you in the Lord that you will adopt no other view; but the one who is disturbing you will bear his judgment, whoever he is."*** Galatians 5:9-10

A little leaven leavens the whole dough. A little. It doesn't take much. Just a little twisting here, a little compromise there, a little doubt over here and before you know it the whole thing is ruined. This is why God clearly tells us to come out and be separate, to live Holy, to be sanctified, set apart for Him.

At the beginning of this message I said that our text contained a warning and a promise. The warning is that a little leaven leavens the whole dough. I think I have made that clear.

What then is the promise? The promise is that if we stick close to God, trust Him in faith, then He will live in our midst, walk among us and we will be His sons and daughters. We will be abundantly blessed. God clearly says: ***"Therefore, come out from their midst and be separate," says the Lord.***

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There is nothing better, than to be accepted by God. There is nothing better than to be in the place where God is pleased with us. In the Aaronic blessing we say: May The Lord Bless you and keep you. May The Lord make His face to shine upon you and be gracious unto you. May The Lord lift up His countenance upon you and give you His peace. He does, when we submit to Him in faith and obedience. When we live according to His rules and His standards.

Personally I make it my aim to be pleasing to my Heavenly Father. I try to live in a way that honours and pleases Him. I pray and strive that we as a congregation would always honour Him and be pleasing to Him

It cost our Father an awful lot, to bring us into His family. He had to shed the blood of His only begotten Son, Jesus. He did it because He loves us.

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Out of His incredible love, Jesus took our punishment, bore our sin, died in our place. How can we not love Him? How can we not strive to honour Him? He experienced hell so that we wouldn't have too. He freely offers us a place in the Father's House, which means in His family, at His table.

Let us make a commitment today that we as individuals, and as a congregation will always honour him in all ways. May we make a commitment to stand up for the Truth and to obey God no matter what.

Let us be that light that shines brightly, the salt that is salty.

We will accept no compromise, but we will as Martin Luther did so long ago say Sola Scriptura – God's Word Alone.

As we do God will bless us and keep us.

Amen.

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All Bible quotations taken from New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise stated.